

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1, 4, 7, 11, and 17 are amended. Claims 1, 4, and 11 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance. As the Examiner will note, allowable claim 4 has been rewritten in independent form, and independent claims 1 and 11 have been amended to include previously examined features and, therefore, should not raise new issues or require an additional search by the Examiner.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by placing the claims in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that the Applicant did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that:

Claims 4-6 and 14-16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims; and

Claims 9, 10, 19, and 20 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

The Applicant appreciates the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter. In response, objected-to claim 4 has been rewritten in independent form; and independent claims 1 and 11 are amended herein to recite a novel combination of elements not suggested by the reference cited by the Examiner.

Therefore, independent claims 1, 4, and 9 are in condition for allowance.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 7-10, and 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, the Applicant has amended claims 7 and 17 to correct each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. The Applicant respectfully submits that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a)

Claims 1, 3-7, 8, 11, 13, 17 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by AAPA shown as FIG. 7; and

claims 2 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over AAPA FIG. 7 in view of JP09-207855.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent Claims 1 and 11

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite a combination of elements in a steering shaft support structure, including *inter alia*

wherein the left and right pipes are L-shaped.

In addition, independent claim 11 has been amended to recite a combination of elements in a steering shaft support structure, including *inter alia*

wherein the cross beam is mounted on upward facing surfaces of the left and right supports.

Support for the above novel features can be seen, for example, in FIGS. 3-5.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 11 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including AAPA FIG. 7.

In contrast to the presently claimed invention, FIG. 7 which show prior arts, merely disclosed a fragmentary portion 116 of the body frame with two forward projecting nuts 116, to which arc shaped rear holder 114 is attached.

In other words, the rear holder 114 is merely attached to a front face of the frame portion 116, and is not placed in spanning relation between left and right pipes (supports), as recited in claims 1 and 11.

At least for the reasons explained above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independent claims 1 and 11 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including AAPA FIG. 7.

Therefore, independent claims 1 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Independent Claim 4

Objected-to claim 4 has been rewritten in independent form, and thus is in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) are respectfully requested.

Dependent Claims

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 7 and 17 have been amended.

All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

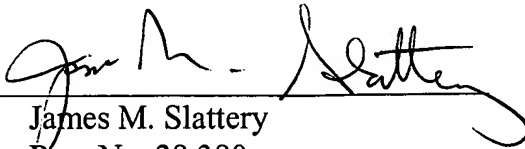
Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 
James M. Slaterry
Reg. No. 28,380
P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

JMS/CTT/eb/gf 